2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

GHOTUL MEMBERSHIP AND RULES

'Now that you have begun to come to the ghotul, you must come every day. You must bring one bit of wood every day. You must first salute me and then all the other chelik and you must do what they tell you to do.' To a girl he says, 'You must obey the Belosa and Dulosa, and clean the ghotul every day'. 883X

A little boy must bring a *gik*-mat with him. This is usually made for him by his mother or an elder sister. But a girl is allowed to beg for a 'camping site' on someone else's mat.

The children are now called *nona* or *noni* till they get proper titles. They do not join the dances, unless they are being specially instructed; they generally play and sleep together. At bedtime they have to salute the full members with Johar. Every evening they must bring a bit of wood for the ghotul store. In some places they have to hand round the tobacco which nowadays takes the place of the ganja which was provided in Lingo's ghotul. When girls are few, the boy probationers massage the elder boys, but not as the girls do it—they massage the legs and thighs. Both boys and girls have to act as ghotul fags and are made to work hard enough. Old Sukali of Masora described how as a little girl, the Piosa of the ghotul, 'I used to carry little bundles for the others at dances and marriages. I was always ordered about by everyone'.

The older boys and girls take a lot of trouble over these children. They teach them manners and to keep their mouths shut. They instruct them in dancing and the ghotul games. They watch them closely and punish any failure or slackness. They specially watch a child's regularity of attendance, and whether a boy brings his wood properly and the girl does her cleaning. Regularity, obedience and habits of work are taught and tested. 883X 867

When a sufficient time has passed, and the leaders see that the children have grasped the ghotul rules and customs, they decide to give them a title at the next Dassera or Diwali. To the Muria these festivals are simply dates; they do not observe them in a religious sense; and the date is nearly always wrong. In some ghotul, children are given names at any time of the year; in others, boys are named at Dassera and girls at Diwali; in others again, boys and girls are named together at Diwali. In some ghotul, in Pandripani, for example, and Bandopal, girls are given their titles at the menarche. 'When a girl first puts water on her head, then we give her a name.' But this cannot be a general rule, for I have seen dozens of little girls with ghotul names. 883X 553

Titles are given at a simple and pleasant ceremony. I was present at Sidhawand on 5 November 1940 at the naming of five children. At the beginning of the evening, the boys and girls assembled, each bringing a seer of parched rice. The Sirdar and Kotwar measured each contribution to see that the quantity was right, and then poured it onto a cloth spread on a mat in the middle of the ghotul compound. Presently the Belosa brought three leaf-cups and the Sirdar filled one for Lingo Pen, one 'for the Diwali' and one for the Village Mother and her consort. The rest of the rice was divided into four parts, for men, for women, for Kokameta (a neighbouring ghotul with which the Sidhawand ghotul was on very friendly terms) and for the boys and girls of Sidhawand. These last, it may be observed, only got a quarter of the feast.

This done, the Belosa and Dulosa held a formal consultation, came forward and called out three diminutive boys, Tuna, Gando and Dorga. They caught hold of each in turn, lifted him up, hit him twice and announced his name. To Tuna they gave the title Tel-dundi, to Gando the name Hardi-garbo and

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

I

'We obey our ghotul laws more faithfully than the laws of Government; for we ourselves made the ghotul laws, and so we love them.'

—Common Muria saying

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THE life of the chelik and motiari is strictly regulated, and when a leader is appointed one of the powers with which he is entrusted is that of judging and punishing offenders against the ghotul code. It is surprising how important a place these punishments hold in the minds of the

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[276]

FIG. 97. Comb from Palari. The two horns are of bees-wax
Width 2½"

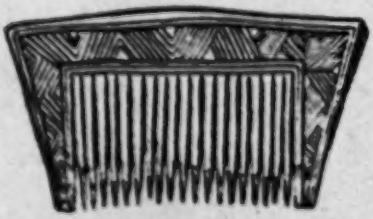

FIG. 98. Comb from Antagarh
Width 5"

FIG. 99. The *Pude-gota*
Actual size

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GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

children. When they are initiated, the little boys are told—'You must come every day, or you'll be punished'. The girls are likewise told—'You must

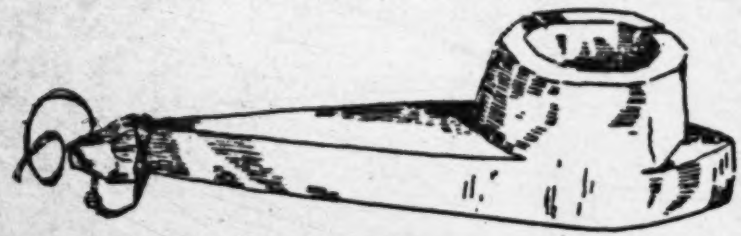

FIG. 100. Tobacco pounder
Length 15"

come every day, or you'll be punished. You must massage the chelik, or you'll be punished.' And when a girl leaves the ghotul at marriage, her

FIG. 101. The *Dudu-muri-gota*
Height 6"

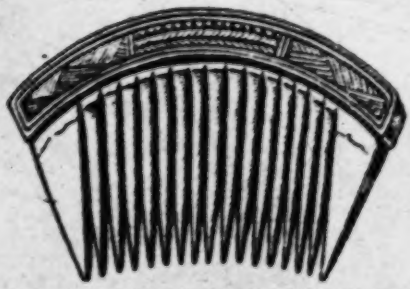

FIG. 102. A Jhoria comb from Markabera
Width 3½"

most tender memories, as revealed in the farewell songs, seem to be connected with punishments. *'Dudhär gai ke lät mäthai*—The cow that gives milk:

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even her kicks are sweet.' A study of ghotul offences and the type of punishment awarded, therefore, may be expected to throw some light on Muria notions of morality and the inner life of chelik and motiari.

Their offences, of course, cannot be understood properly except against the background of the general moral and social life of the tribe. To the Muria, as to most aboriginals, tribal solidarity is the supreme good, and anything that breaks this precious unity and fellowship must be condemned. Individualism is the great sin. For this reason, quarrelling and homicide are rare, theft is almost as uncommon. There are few who refuse to share the common work and interests of the community. Adultery is bad, not only because it infringes the rights of another Muria, but because it breaks up the carefully regulated domestic system of the people, and threatens to disrupt it by jealousy and hatred.

We have already seen the stress laid by the Muria on work. Slackness and laziness are very severely regarded, and are the commonest sources of friction between wife and husband. Cleanliness, decency, decorum and modesty are virtues much prized. A quiet and kindly attitude is expected of the tribal leaders; the bully and the coward are equally disliked.

Against this background, what sort of actions are condemned by ghotul opinion and punishable in ghotul law? Let us first consider those actions that are held to betray the common interest. They are doubly important, for in the highly specialized and concentrated fellowship of the ghotul, the general tribal instinct for unity becomes intensified.

II

Quarrels in the dormitory are strongly condemned. They are disturbing to the peace of ghotul life and specially offensive to so gentle and uncontentious a people. Children are fined for this, and may even be expelled. In Khutgaon there was once a very quarrelsome chelik. After a time, the leaders of the ghotul called him and said, 'Do you want to be in the ghotul or outside it?' The dreaded threat of expulsion brought him to his senses and he gave no more trouble.

The betrayal of the ghotul fellowship by repeating outside anything that happens within its walls, especially any stories of the intimate relations of chelik and motiari or some scandal about a pregnancy, is one of the greatest of ghotul crimes, for 'that which comes from the mouth bears fruit throughout the world'. Once at Gorma, the Kotwar and Belosa revealed to the village that a girl was pregnant; they were expelled and told that they would never be readmitted. Only when they brought a lot of liquor and fell at the feet of each chelik in turn, promising never to offend again, were they allowed to return.

[551]

Ghotul solidarity is constantly emphasized by the use of the ghotul title, and proper names may never be used between members. If a young child forgets this and addresses, say, his elder brother by the name that is always used at home, the others explain the custom to him; but if he offends again, he is punished.

The dormitory has to be kept clean. Though spitting is permitted, anyone who urinates inside the building is punished. This prohibition extends, in some places, to the court outside. To break wind is not a very serious offence; the children laugh at the offenders and call them *padra* or *padri*. Only a light punishment is imposed. At Esalnar the culprit had to salute

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Muria

every boy in turn saying, 'Johar, *mahārāj*, I have farted'. An interesting rule prohibits the other boys and girls from laughing at the offender too much. The name *padra* may be used three times but not more; anyone who carries the joke too far is fined.

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FIG. 103. A brass tobacco-box made by the local Ghasia
Actual size

A bed-wetter is punished with the *khotla-pahara* described below; if incurable, he may be expelled.

Most ghotul are actually kept beautifully clean; occasional lapses are severely penalized. It is the special duty of the girls to sweep and cow-dung the building, but often the Kotwar in charge of them is punished instead. At Kabonga, when the Diwan found that the ashes of the previous day's fires had not been cleared away, he reported the matter to the Inspector who called the Kotwar and threw ash all over him. The Kotwar insisted that it was the girls' fault, not his, and so the girls were called and ash was thrown over them and pushed into their private parts. At Kokori also, two girls were tied to the roof by their feet and ashes put into their vaginae. 'As you've let the ghotul be dirty, we are making your privates dirty', said the boys.

It is generally the chelik who have to see to the surroundings of the ghotul. At Palari in 1941, the Munshi, Sipahi and Likandar were told to clear a space in front of the building for a dance, but they failed to do so. They were hung together from the roof until they begged forgiveness and promised to do the work at once. The younger boys are often punished for failing to bring their daily tribute of wood—a task they all dislike. In the Jamkot

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ghotul there was a boy called Antar (from a hunter-whip) who had the duty of 'whipping' boys who failed in this task.

Chelik and motiari are insistent that everyone must take an equal share (though not always the same share) in the common labour and common recreations. Failure to attend the ghotul regularly is punished; an absence of two or three days, unless there is a very good excuse, means a fine. It is specially bad for the motiari to absent themselves. This is regarded as a really serious offence, an infringement of the chelik's rights, a breach of ghotul fellowship; it raises the suspicion that the girl is having an affair with a married man or a member of another caste. On the other hand, if a girl enters the ghotul during her menstrual period she must provide liquor and perhaps a more substantial sacrifice to appease Lingo Pen whom she has offended.

A girl's conduct is controlled when she visits another village. She may go to the ghotul to dance and even perhaps massage and comb the boys but she is expected to return home before bedtime. If she does not, and the boys of her own ghotul discover that she has betrayed them, they punish her with a heavy fine.

The motiari are often obstinate and troublesome—at least in male opinion—and have to be disciplined. Sometimes they get sulky and refuse to join the games and dances; the Jularo of Sarandi was fined an anna for failing to attend a dance. Sometimes they refuse 'to let a boy play with them on the ground'; sometimes they fail to comb or massage properly. At Kajen the ghotul Kotwar reports every Tuesday whether any of the girls have lost their combs, or have refused to do the chelik's hair.

It is regarded as very offensive for a chelik to force a girl against her will: in Markabera a chelik once forced the Alosa, who was the ghotul-wife of another boy, and was fined as much as two rupees. But if a girl refuses—once she is mature—to have intercourse with at least one of the chelik, there is consternation, and if she persists, both boys and girls may refuse to attend her wedding.

Boys also may be punished for failing to fulfil their social obligations. At Palari, the Baidar and Dafedar refused, on account of some private spite, to attend the Captain's marriage and each was fined four annas. At Gorma the headman's son, who went to school and learnt there to despise the ghotul and its ways, found when the day of his marriage approached that the boys and girls would not attend it. 'All these years', they said, 'you have despised us. You have not joined our dances or helped us in our work. Now you can get married without us.' The boy had to dress in all the Muria ornaments, change his little cap for a turban, and sleep in the ghotul for a week before he was forgiven.

III

Ghotul officers who fail to perform their duties are punished. No one is privileged and no one is exempt. This is an important point. Were an older man, like the Diwan of Masora who still holds office at the age of forty, to try to protect his own son or daughter, he would himself be fined even though he was the leader and a final court of appeal in all disputes. If the head of the chelik tried to protect his own special motiari or his ghotul-wife, he might be turned out of office. Bindo had no hesitation in punishing the Dulosa, who was his lover, for failing to clean the ghotul.

Mangru of Masora told us how when he was Pahardar it was his duty to punish people. But he could never bring himself to do it, so he himself was punished. His legs were tied to the roof and he had to hang there while boys and girls sang one Relo song. A former Chalki of the Jamkot ghotul

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GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

was similarly punished for failing in his duty to make the chelik and motiari work at a wedding. As a boy Bindo punished the ghotul Kotwar for disobeying his orders to fetch the motiari in the evening; fifty years afterwards he still remembers the incident with satisfaction.

When the head of the ghotul is penalized, it is a convention in some ghotul that the motiari should beg to be punished in his stead. This happened at Chandabera when I was there, and the Sirdar was fined for not making proper arrangements for his visitors. The girls implored to be allowed to suffer for him.

Fig. 104. A sun and moon tobacco-box
Height 2½"

Fig. 105. Boy's necklace, from Kajua, of cowries strung together with red and 'silver' beads

Should the head of the ghotul turn out a bully or a slacker, the chelik and motiari take the help of the village headman and remove him. This does not happen very often because there is plenty of time to test a boy before he is appointed. But it is not always possible to judge how far power is likely to corrupt character, and scandals do occur. I have recorded a number of cases from the history of the last few years. In Mannegaon, the Leyur-Gaita was removed for bullying and abusing the children. The Malik of Esalnar was once degraded for bullying. The Kotwar of the Berma ghotul a few years ago got very much above himself and used 'to punish for four hours instead of one' until the members rebelled. They fined him a rupee, deprived him of office, made him a 'subject' with the name of Silledar, and appointed the Kandki in his place. Recently in Kehalakot the Kotwar gave so much trouble to the girls that he was fined eight annas and removed.

Laziness also disqualifies a boy from holding high office. In Atargaon the Manjhi was dismissed 'for not working properly'. The Kokori Chalki was degraded to the rank of Kotwar for laziness and the Kotwar was appointed

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in his place. The Belosa of Berma was removed because she was too slack to control the girls.

I have only once heard of a boy being removed from office for abusing his sexual privileges. In Sonawal the Diwan seduced another chelik's 'wife'. The others fined him, but he refused to pay, saying, 'I am your master, I am not going to pay a fine to my "subjects"'. He and his own wife, the Diwanin, or head of the girls, were both degraded and made 'subjects'.

IV

We now turn to breaches of the sexual conventions of the ghotul. Here, according to the type of ghotul, two opposite types of offence are recognized.

In those ghotul where there is a rule against 'pairing off', boys and girls are punished if they sleep together too often. The Subedar and Silo of the Binjhli ghotul were fined four annas each for sleeping together every day. In these ghotul too it is considered very bad form for a boy to be 'possessive' about a girl, to be jealous over her and claim her as his. 'We must change every two or four days, or we are fined.'

But in the other type of ghotul, boys and girls are fined for committing what may be called 'ghotul adultery'. A case of this has already been described in Chapter XI. If a chelik sleeps with another boy's motiari during her 'husband's' absence, he is fined. If the Kotwar 'finds the cloth of a girl' who is not the boy's 'mate' on his mat, he reports the matter and the boy is punished.

In villages where there are separate ghotul for boys and girls, they may be fined for visiting one another on days when this is taboo. In Lihagaon, where there were separate dormitories for boys and girls, some years ago the Likhen of the boys was Lamhada to the Mularo of the girls. One night she came to the boys' ghotul and slept with him—a double impropriety since engaged couples are not supposed to sleep together in the ghotul. He was fined a rupee by the chelik, but refused to pay, and on the third day ran away with the girl whom he had already made pregnant. They were brought back and fined two rupees. This time they paid up, and the ghotul members agreed to the marriage and said they would attend it.

With all the freedom of the ghotul, there is a strict insistence on decorum and modesty. It is remarkable that at weddings when the older women and men behave with a complete lack of restraint, abusing each other and catching hold of each other in the most obscene manner, the motiari are never molested. The chelik are sometimes punished for showing an indecent interest in the girls even in the ghotul. Once at Palari the girls were dancing the Durpa Dandi, or Lotus Stalk Dance, when each girl rests one leg on her neighbour's waist. It is considered a rather risky dance and the girls rarely perform it in public. The Kandki of the ghotul sat down near the dancers and tried to peep up in a rather unpleasant manner. The girls stopped dancing and took him inside the ghotul. 'What were you sitting down for?' 'Nothing.' 'You wanted to look at us, you dirty little beast, so we're going to punish you.' They tied his hands together and bound them to the roof for fifteen minutes. When he was released, he had to salute each of the girls in turn and beg forgiveness.

V

How does the machinery of ghotul justice work? How are its punishments inflicted? I will give one or two actual examples before proceeding to tabulate the penalties.

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to share: and each development, each advance on the part of mankind can be traced back to the opposite formula: ability to share'.[1] 152

The absence of jealousy among primitive people has often been noticed and Hartland has given a long list of tribes remarkable for this amiable trait. Since he connects it, however, with general promiscuity, indifference to the marriage tie and a fundamental belief that primitive man is incapable of real love, his study does not throw very much light on Muria conditions. Westermarck and Briffault have also each filled a chapter with rather dubious evidence on the subject from all parts of the world, which would have had greater value had there been an agreed definition of jealousy among their authorities.

As with the problem of pre-nuptial chastity, so with jealousy, our evidence is confused, contradictory and little of it would be admitted in a court of law. The result is that it is possible to produce equally imposing lists both of those peoples who are temperamentally jealous and of those who are not.

Even in Bastar two tribes living side by side present a notable contrast in this matter; the Bison-horn Maria of Dantewara and Sukma are notorious for the violence of their jealous and suspicious temperament which fills the jail at Jagdalpur with homicides; the Muria are no less remarkable for an almost complete absence of this passion. I do not think it is possible to lay down a rule; doubtless some tribes are more attached to possession, dignity, prestige than others. Jealousy always has its roots in something else.

But what is so interesting about the Muria is that they recognize jealousy as a problem, accept it as a danger to marital happiness, and direct the education of their children towards eliminating it from their psychology.

The ghotul trains its members in a strict equality; on the whole, just as in a big family, it manages fairly successfully to laugh out of countenance dignity and prestige; it sets its face against possessiveness and the desire for the exclusive enjoyment of anything; it insists on things being shared. Even the *joditdr* ghotul, where girls are allotted to their partners in a fairly permanent relation, achieves this in no small measure; and the newer type succeeds in an unusual degree in eliminating jealousy. Undoubtedly, as I have said already, there is a very remarkable general diffused affection among the boys and girls. The sense of property and possession is certainly lessened; policemen have told me that they believe the small amount of crime in the north of Bastar is due to the fact that Muria children learn while still in the ghotul to share things with everybody else and not to grab them for themselves. As the chelik said at Ulera, 'There is equal love for all, just as in a family'. 883x 152 867

Naturally there will be moments of strain, particularly when there are a few boys and girls of outstanding physical attraction in the ghotul; yet sexual jealousy between boys is certainly lessened. An old Muria of Jaitpuri, recalling his ghotul days, said that there was a girl in the ghotul whom he loved very much. 'When she slept with other boys I used to feel a little jealous, but I said to myself, "This ghotul life is only for four days and in any case if I don't have her today, I'll have her tomorrow".' In the ghotul two friends will lie down with a girl between them, and sometimes—as at Sidhawand—a group of boys occupies a corner of the ghotul with a group of girls, every one of whom is shared among them. Several of my chelik friends have told me that they have slept again and again with every girl in the ghotul.

There are, of course, exceptions. Ghotul differ from one another, a few deviating widely from the classical model. The younger boys are sometimes jealous of their seniors; I have noticed this at Masora and Markabera. As 883x 152

[1] W. Stekel, 'Jealousy', Forbath, op. cit., p. 159.